

NOT VOTING—10

Berkley Davis, Jo Ann Tancredo
Conyers Jindal Young (AK)
Cubin Lowey
Davis (IL) Paul

□ 1803

Messrs. TURNER, TOM DAVIS of Virginia, SHUSTER, Mrs. MYRICK, and Mr. TERRY changed their vote from “yea” to “nay.”

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, and Messrs. ISRAEL, DINGELL, RUSH, and GORDON of Tennessee changed their vote from “nay” to “yea.”

So the motion to table was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. SKELETON. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 223, nays 201, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 624]

YEAS—223

Abercrombie	Donnelly	Klein (FL)	Rahall	Sestak	Udall (NM)
Ackerman	Doyle	Lampson	Rangel	Shea-Porter	Van Hollen
Allen	Duncan	Langevin	Reyes	Sherman	Velázquez
Altmine	Edwards	Lantos	Rodriguez	Shuler	Visclosky
Andrews	Ellison	Larsen (WA)	Ross	Sires	Walz (MN)
Arcuri	Emanuel	Larson (CT)	Rothman	Skelton	Wasserman
Baca	Emerson	Lee	Royal-Allard	Slaughter	Schultz
Baird	Engel	Levin	Ruppersberger	Smith (WA)	Waters
Baldwin	Eshoo	Lewis (GA)	Rush	Solis	Watson
Bean	Etheridge	Lipinski	Salazar	Space	Watt
Becerra	Farr	Loebssack	Sánchez, Linda	Spratt	Waxman
Berman	Fattah	Lofgren, Zoe	T.	Stark	Weiner
Berry	Filner	Lowey	Sanchez, Loretta	Stupak	Welch (VT)
Bishop (GA)	Frank (MA)	Lynch	Sarbanes	Sutton	Wexler
Bishop (NY)	Giffords	Mahoney (FL)	Schakowsky	Tanner	Wilson (OH)
Blumenauer	Gilchrest	Maloney (NY)	Schiff	Tauscher	Woolsey
Boswell	Gillibrand	Markay	Schwartz	Thompson (CA)	Wu
Boucher	Gonzalez	Matsui	Scott (GA)	Thompson (MS)	Wynn
Boyd (FL)	Gordon	McCarthy (NY)	Scott (VA)	Tierney	Yarmuth
Boyda (KS)	Green, Al	McCullom (MN)	Serrano	Towns	
Brady (PA)	Green, Gene	McDermott		Udall (CO)	
Braley (IA)	Grijalva	McGovern			
Brown, Corrine	Gutierrez	McIntyre			
Butterfield	Hall (NY)	McNerney			
Capps	Hare	McNulty			
Capuano	Harman	Meek (FL)			
Cardoza	Hastings (FL)	Meeks (NY)			
Carnahan	Herseth Sandlin	Melancon			
Carson	Higgins	Michaud			
Castor	Hill	Miller (NC)			
Chandler	Hinchey	Miller, George			
Clarke	Hinojosa	Mitchell			
Clay	Hirono	Dent			
Cleaver	Hodes	Diaz-Balart, L.			
Clyburn	Holt	Diaz-Balart, M.			
Cohen	Honda	Doolittle			
Cooper	Hooley	Drake			
Costa	Hoyer	Dreier			
Costello	Inslie	McCaul (TX)			
Courtney	Israel	Ehlers			
Cramer	Jackson (IL)	Ellsworth			
Crowley	Jackson-Lee	English (PA)			
Cuellar	(TX)	McCrery			
Cummings	Jefferson	McHenry			
Davis (AL)	Johnson (GA)	McHugh			
Davis (CA)	Johnson, E. B.	McKeon			
Davis (IL)	Jones (NC)	McMorris			
Davis, Lincoln	Jones (OH)	Ortiz			
DeFazio	Kagen	Flake			
DeGette	Kanjorski	Pallone			
Delahunt	Kaptur	Pascarella			
DeLauro	Kennedy	Pastor			
Dicks	Kildee	Payne			
Dingell	Kilpatrick	Fox			
Doggett	Kind	Pomeroy			
		Price (NC)			

NOT VOTING—8

Berkley	Davis, Jo Ann	Tancredo	Rahall	Sestak	Udall (NM)
Conyers	Jindal	Young (AK)	Rangel	Shea-Porter	Van Hollen
Cubin	Lowey		Reyes	Sherman	Velázquez
Davis (IL)	Paul		Rodriguez	Shuler	Visclosky
			Ross	Sires	Walz (MN)
			Rothman	Skelton	Wasserman
			Royal-Allard	Slaughter	Schultz
			Ruppersberger	Smith (WA)	Waters
			Rush	Solis	Watson
			Ryan (OH)	Space	Watt
			Salazar	Spratt	Waxman
			Sánchez, Linda	Stark	Weiner
			T.	Stupak	Welch (VT)
			Sanchez, Loretta	Sutton	Wexler
			Sarbanes	Tanner	Wilson (OH)
			Schakowsky	Tauscher	Woolsey
			Schiff	Thompson (CA)	Wu
			Schwartz	Thompson (MS)	Wynn
			Scott (GA)	Tierney	Yarmuth
			Scott (VA)	Towns	
			Serrano	Udall (CO)	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1813

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEINER) laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on the Budget:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Speaker NANCY PELOSI,
Office of the Speaker,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: I am writing to officially announce my resignation on this date, Thursday, July 12, 2007, from the House Committee on the Budget, where it has been a true honor to serve.

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to call me.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

BETTY SUTTON,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted.

There was no objection.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 540) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 540

Resolved, That the following named Member be and is hereby elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY.—Ms. Sutton (to rank immediately after Mr. Johnson of Georgia).

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1815

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1851, SECTION 8 VOUCHER REFORM ACT OF 2007

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 534 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 534

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for

consideration of the bill (H.R. 1851) to reform the housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. All points of order against the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived except those arising under clause 10 of rule XXI. Notwithstanding clause 11 of rule XVIII, no amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration in the House of H.R. 1851 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida, my colleague, Mr. DIAZ-BALART. All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. CASTOR. I also ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 534.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 534 provides for consider-

ation of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, under a structured rule. The rule provides 1 hour of general debate, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services.

The rule makes in order the Financial Services substitute as an original bill for the purpose of amendment.

The rule also makes in order six amendments printed in the Rules Committee report. Each amendment is debatable for 10 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, many American families are facing a critical housing crunch. The cost of an apartment or home is rising out of sight. But there is good news from a majority of this Congress that keeps fighting for a new direction for America. The reform provided today through H.R. 1851, under this rule, which has bipartisan support, will help families in need of affordable housing.

I would like to thank Housing and Community Development Subcommittee Chair MAXINE WATERS, and Financial Services Chair BARNEY FRANK for their leadership in housing and commitment to our Nation's families.

Our actions today are needed because, over the past few years, the Bush administration has caused great frustration when it comes to housing. The White House eliminated housing opportunities for approximately 150,000 families under a major section 8 funding formula change.

The White House refused to release about \$1.4 billion in unused voucher funds for affordable housing. So, Mr. Speaker, instead of homes for many families in need, thousands of families have been placed on waiting lists.

In my hometown of Tampa, Florida, during a 1-week open enrollment session, more than 10,000 seniors, families and veterans indicated a need for housing. But, instead of receiving housing, they were placed on a waiting list. The waiting list takes up to 4 years, and is so long that the Tampa Housing Authority is unable to help others that need it.

Even with this reform bill, Mr. Speaker, the final fair market value rents are in need of adjustment. It's ridiculous and completely unreasonable for HUD to believe that a 3-bedroom apartment in the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater area is available for just over \$1,000. The truth is, those affordable homes and apartments are few and far between, and this must be fixed.

Nevertheless, H.R. 1851 takes positive steps to ensure that more families are able to find a clean, safe, stable and affordable place to live. Through the major reforms contained in the bill, we are going to increase the number of families that can receive housing over the next 5 years.

We will simplify the rules and procedures used to establish rents for section 8 and provide housing. We're going

to reduce the bureaucracy and red tape for our public housing authorities so they can concentrate on assisting the elderly, the physically challenged and other struggling families.

We're going to provide incentives for families to become more self-sufficient by obtaining employment, increasing their incomes, pursuing higher education and planning for retirement. These families will also be able to use section 8 vouchers for a down payment on the American dream of home ownership. We will continue to fight to keep families safe and protected in an affordable, clean and safe home.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support this bill. And the Congress should be eager to pass this reform.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my friend, the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR) for the time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today, the Housing Choice Voucher Program, more commonly known as section 8, helps provide housing assistance to around 2 million low-income families and individuals each year. The program began in 1974, primarily as a project-based rental assistance program. By the next decade, it had become evident that the project-based model was too costly and concentrated families in high poverty areas, thereby making it harder to break the cycle of poverty.

In 1983, Congress stopped providing project-based section 8 contracts and created vouchers as a replacement. The voucher program allows families with a voucher to find and lease a unit in the private sector, instead of being limited to certain section 8 housing complexes. Recipients pay a portion of their rent, based on their income, while the voucher covers the remaining portion of the rent.

In 1998, the program consumed 42 percent of HUD's annual budget. By 2005, it had grown to over 62 percent of HUD's budget. If the growth in the program is not addressed and reformed, we could face a situation where deserving low-income families would be unable to receive any assistance.

The underlying bill makes a number of improvements to the section 8 program to reform and simplify regulations of local public housing agencies, while preserving essential tenant protection. H.R. 1851 aims to simplify rent calculation and inspection requirements for section 8 vouchers, project-based assistance and public housing, and to promote self sufficiency on the part of assisted families through work incentives and home ownership opportunities.

This bill can make good changes to the section 8 voucher program. The funding allocation formula included in the bill codifies the formula change made in the continuing resolution,

February 2007. It uses the public housing agencies' vouchers costs and utilization rates from the last 12 months, instead of the 2004 numbers for a quarter of that year.

Under current law, HUD is required to recapture the amount in excess of each public housing agency's reserve limits, funds that are left over after the renewal of vouchers. If the PHA does not use all the money that the government has authorized, then the government reallocates those funds to another PHA the following year.

The community that I'm honored to represent has lost millions of dollars to other public housing agencies under the change in law made by this Congress. The current funding formula neglects the coverage costs of litigation issues or weather damage, of living facilities which were financed by the excess funds.

The manager's amendment, Mr. Speaker, which will be debated later today, will allow public housing agencies to retain, to keep 12.5 percent of their reserve funds during the first year of the formula change. After the transition, PHAs will remain with 5 percent of their reserve funds in a given year. The manager's amendment aims to somewhat compensate for losses faced by public housing agencies such as those in my community.

I commend the Financial Services Committee, its chairman and ranking member, and all of its members, for working in a bipartisan manner to make improvements to the section 8 program. I look forward to the committee's continued efforts to improve the program, and to addressing the concerns I have mentioned with the funding formula.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the bipartisan nature with which and under which the Financial Services Committee has worked this bill, the majority in the Rules Committee failed to live up to that same standard. There were 23 amendments submitted to the Rules Committee for consideration. The majority on the Rules Committee made only six amendments in order. Yes, half of them, a whopping three, were Republican amendments, but there were 12 Republican amendments that had been submitted.

During consideration of this rule, the minority made attempts to make several other Republican amendments in order, but the majority blocked each amendment by party line vote. That's quite a contrast to how the Financial Services Committee has worked.

My colleague on the Rules Committee from Texas, Mr. SESSIONS, also offered an amendment to the rule that would have made this an open rule, Mr. Speaker. The majority on the Rules Committee blocked our efforts for an open rule. This is contrary to how the majority promised to run the House of Representatives, and it is most unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to yield 5 minutes to the distinguished chair of the Financial Services Committee, Mr. FRANK.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman. I thank my colleague from Florida for the generous words about the procedure. There were some differences between us on the parties on this, but in general, this represents a consensus.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to give credit where credit is due. This is a result of a process that was begun by our former colleague from Ohio, Mr. NEY.

□ 1830

He convened when he was Chair of the Housing Subcommittee a set of roundtable discussions with participation from HUD, from tenant groups, from landlord groups that participate, and from others. And much of what is in this bill came out of the sessions that he and his then ranking member, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), now the Chair of the subcommittee, did.

So as is always the case in a parliamentary body, we will, as is appropriate, focus to some extent on some differences. And there are several amendments that will present sharp differences, but people ought to keep in mind that it is in the context of a great deal of agreement.

In addition to the agreements already there, I have had conversations with several of the Republican Members, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER); the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL); the ranking member of the subcommittee, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT). We have some agreements about what we should be doing, how this should be interpreted, what we should be doing going further, and I look forward in the general debate to colloquies with all of them so that I think we can further solidify the agreements that we have going forward.

Now, as to the substance of the bill, the section 8 program is a very important one. Many of us believe that the problem has been not with the section 8 program but that it stood alone, that it was not accompanied by programs that would build housing. And in other pieces of legislation that have come out of the Financial Services Committee, some of which have come to the floor, some of which are about to come to the floor, we are going to try to add a supply side, if I may borrow the phrase, to the demand side.

We have a program here which increases the demand for housing by putting money in the hands of people who otherwise would not be able to afford decent housing. But if all you do is that and you don't also help build housing, you can have an adverse impact on price. So we hope to be able to balance it, but that is not the fault of this program.

What this bill does is to make it more flexible. It has much in there

that HUD agrees with; although, again, I don't claim that everybody agrees with everything. An indication of the extent to which this simply improves the program, I will include in the RECORD several letters on this subject. One letter comes from those who are the landlords, who rent.

And, by the way, we are not automatically doing them a favor. In a tight rental market, as we have in many parts of this country, it is a good thing for the public purpose that landlords are willing to participate. Many of these landlords, they don't have to be in the section 8 program, so we try to reach out to them. And here is a letter endorsing the bill from the Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, the Institute of Real Estate Management, the National Affordable Housing Management Association, the National Apartment Association, the National Association of Home Builders, the National Leased Housing Association, and the National Multi Housing Council.

We also have strong support from those in the public sector at the local level who administer this: the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials and the Council of Large Public Housing Agencies. And then we have also a letter from a large coalition of advocacy groups, of religious groups that are in the business of building the housing. There is a very broad degree of support for this bill.

I understand there are a couple of points of difference, and I realize, too, there are some points of difference that couldn't have been presented. I would have liked them to be. But I think that the three amendments that are in order on the Republican side do present some of the most important differences.

I should note, by the way, that while three amendments reflect the disagreement that many in the minority have with the bill, two of the other amendments are really bipartisan. The manager's amendment is an amendment in which the gentleman from Illinois and the gentlewoman from California collaborated.

So the manager's amendment, one of the six amendments, it is designated as the Waters amendment, but it is very bipartisan. And the second one that is bipartisan is an amendment that deals with situations that threaten the ability of people to stay in affordable housing in the district my colleague from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and our colleague from the committee from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE).

So we have two amendments which are completely bipartisan. We have those three. And then the one that the gentlewoman from New York will offer on domestic violence, which I don't think is terribly controversial.

So I understand that we haven't resolved all the differences. I do think that, and let me put it this way, of all the housing bills that have come to the floor from this committee, this is the

least controversial. I don't want anyone to get bored. When we come back in early September, we can fight again. But I do think on this one, while there will be some disagreements, what we reflect is a basic consensus on how to improve an important social program that, as I said, began under Republican leadership in the last Congress and we have largely continued the process.

I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

JULY 12, 2007.

DEAR CHAIRMAN FRANK AND RANKING MEMBER BACHUS: We are writing to lend our strong support for H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA), which is scheduled to be debated in the House today. We represent a diverse array of constituencies—ranging from housing providers to tenants to apartment owners to membership organizations to religious leaders—who all agree that this is a very strong piece of legislation.

Simply put, SEVRA is a good government bill. It stabilizes the voucher program with a permanent funding policy, while simplifying the rules about how to calculate tenant rents and streamlining the housing inspection process. As a result, the voucher program will run more efficiently, tenants will be rewarded when they increase their work effort, and there will be less unnecessary paperwork for all parties involved—housing authorities, tenants, and property owners.

The voucher program is our nation's leading source of housing assistance for low-income people. It serves nearly two million families with children, elderly people, and people with disabilities. Making sure that it operates as effectively as possible is in their interest as well as in our national interest.

We give this bill our strong endorsement so it can continue through the legislative process and be enacted this year.

Sincerely,

AARP, American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA), American Network of Community Options and Resources, Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies (AJFCA), The Arc of the United States, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), Coalition on Human Needs (CRN), Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force, Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), Easter Seals.

Enterprise Community Partners, Housing Assistance Council (HAC), Institute of Real Estate Management, Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Lutheran Services in America, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA).

National AIDS Housing Coalition, National Alliance of HUD Tenants, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Apartment Association, National Association of Home Builders, National Association of Housing Co-ops, National Association of Realtors, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development.

National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA), National Housing Con-

ference, National Housing Trust, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, National Leased Housing Association, National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Multi Housing Council, National People's Action (NPA), National Training and Information Center (NTIC), NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, Poverty & Race Research Action Council (PRRAC), Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office, Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA), Public Justice Center, The United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society, Travelers Aid International, United Cerebral Palsy, United Jewish Communities (UJC).

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS, Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK, Chairman, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. MAXINE WATERS.

Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. SPENCER BACHUS, Ranking Member, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. JUDY BIGGERT, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, House Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN FRANK AND RANKING MEMBER BACHUS: On behalf of the board and members of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), I am writing in regard to your consideration of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA). As passed by the House Financial Services Committee and improved by the proposed Managers' Amendment, NAHRO supports the passage of H.R. 1851.

NAHRO applauds the co-sponsors of H.R. 1851 and the Financial Services Committee as a whole for bringing this important and necessary piece of legislation to the floor for consideration by the full House of Representatives. We also applaud the bipartisan spirit with which this bill has been developed over many months of informed and responsible debate. The provisions now embedded in SEVRA, as passed by the Committee and improved by the Managers' Amendment, will enhance and strengthen the quality and administration of the Section 8 voucher program in responsible and tangible ways.

Most importantly, SEVRA stabilizes the Section 8 voucher program, the administration of which, starting in 2004 under HUD's PIH Notice 2004-7, has been negatively impacted by virtue of a funding distribution formula that has taken appropriated dollars and dispersed them across diverse housing markets without regard to the number of families leased or current voucher costs in each community. The budget-based/block grant-oriented voucher distribution formula in place from FY 2004-FY 2006 has funded some communities over their authorized voucher level, while dramatically underfunding others. As a direct result of this voucher funding formula, at least 150,000 authorized vouchers have been lost nationwide to low-income households who could have otherwise leased or purchased housing under the program. The funding formula in H.R. 1851, which builds on the prior calendar year

funding formula enacted in the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution (PL. 110-5), further corrects this situation and, more significantly, will over time help restore nationwide leasing levels to their historic high pre-FY 2004 thresholds.

There are several additional items included in H.R. 1851 that represent important and positive steps forward in the administration of the Section 8 voucher program. These include:

HAP Funding Policies: In order to adjust to the change in funding formula as noted above, SEVRA contains provisions that create an important transitional mechanism. The bill's transitional mechanism would allow public housing agencies, for a period of time and subject to certain limits, to retain and use their unobligated fund balances. This is particularly important in light of HUD's delayed implementation of agencies' FY 2007 funding amounts.

Administrative Fees: We support the restoration of the post-QHWRA administrative fee structure and rates with improved inflation factors, special fees, fees for each issued voucher, and equitable fees under the Project-Based Voucher (PBV) assistance program for agency-owned units.

Annual Leasing: NAHRO supports the provision in SEVRA that will enable agencies to serve additional families with available funds, while still maintaining the voucher program's overall connection to authorized vouchers.

Housing Quality Inspections of Dwelling Units: NAHRO supports the provision in SEVRA that will allow housing agencies, at their discretion, to complete annual inspections of all their voucher assisted units every two years. This provision will reaffirm the discretionary authority of a local housing agency to perform annual inspections on a geographic basis rather than tying inspections to each household's lease anniversary. We also support the provision allowing housing agencies, at their discretion, to approve a dwelling unit in lieu of its own Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection when a comparable inspection is performed by other governmental entities. Finally, we support allowing housing agencies, at their discretion, to enable eligible voucher households to move into a unit and tender an initial subsidy payment, so long as an HQS inspection does not reveal that health or safety violations are present and repairs are made within 30 days.

In sum, H.R. 1851 improves important elements of both the Section 8 voucher and public housing programs. We again congratulate you on the steps you have taken thus far and look forward to continuing to work with you and your Senate colleagues to develop and pass a pragmatic and necessary piece of legislation that encourages the highest and best use of precious federal funds to help meet the well-documented need for decent, safe and affordable housing in our communities.

Sincerely,

SAUL N. RAMIREZ, Jr.

COUNCIL OF LARGE PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES,

Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,

Chairman, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. MAXINE WATERS,

Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. SPENCER BACHUS,

Ranking Member, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. JUDY BIGGERT, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: On behalf of the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), I am writing in support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA).

SEVRA makes significant changes to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program and marks a significant step forward in simplifying the administration and funding of the program. Under your leadership, Congress has taken the initiative to reform this much needed program which provides housing assistance to two million of the lowest-income families. In addition to other changes important to CLPHA, SEVRA improves the current voucher funding formula, provides for rent simplification and flexibility, clarifies program eligibility, simplifies inspection requirements, and authorizes a funding reserve.

SEVRA is also critically important to CLPHA members and other public housing authorities across the nation for the expansion and far-reaching changes to the Housing Innovation Program (HIP), renamed from Moving to Work. We appreciate Congress making this program more broadly available to the many housing authorities interested in participating in the program.

While SEVRA is not perfect, the underlying bill is sound and we are pleased to offer our support. Again, we thank you for undertaking this initiative, and we look forward to working with you as the legislation continues to evolve and as it moves forward in the legislative process.

Sincerely,

SUNIA ZATERMAN,
Executive Director.

JULY 12, 2007.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE FRANK: We are writing to encourage your support of H.R. 1851 when it goes to the floor. The "Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007" provides important changes to a program that has served as the cornerstone of federal affordable housing policy for more than 30 years.

The undersigned groups worked with the Financial Services Committee to ensure that the legislation addresses issues fundamental to the continued success of the program, including a viable funding formula and important changes to streamline program operations.

H.R. 1851 also addresses several issues that are of particular interest to our organizations:

Provides that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will be required to translate both its own official vital documents as well as selected non-HUD property documents into any language the Department identifies as necessary, and provide a HUD-funded and HUD-administered 800 number for oral interpretation needs.

Amends the inspection timeframes for apartments that will be accepting voucher holders by eliminating unnecessary delays and duplication, thereby encouraging increased apartment owner participation.

Provides important changes to the project-based voucher program to ensure its flexibility as a tool for preserving or expanding the supply of apartments affordable to low-income families in many communities, particularly those with a tight housing market.

We are not able to support the Hensarling amendment as we have not had sufficient

time to review the impact of such work requirements on all affected parties and request that it be withdrawn.

H.R. 1851 is expected to be on the House floor for a vote today, July 12. We urge your support of this important housing measure.

Sincerely,

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.

Institute of Real Estate Management.

National Affordable Housing Management Association.

National Apartment Association.

National Association of Home Builders.

National Leased Housing Association.

National Multi Housing Council.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE).

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I rise in opposition to the rule. It is not because of the final product, but the way in which the rule actually came about.

I have worked closely with the chairman of the Financial Services Committee, and I know that he is a fair individual, and actually in committee he supported several of my amendments and gave us the opportunity to have that vote be held.

It is no secret that we have an immigration crisis facing us in America. It is also no secret that Americans are angry. Like most Members, my office was flooded when the President and the Senate attempted to ram another amnesty immigration program down our throats.

According to a recent Rasmussen poll, 56 percent of Americans surveyed support an "enforcement only" approach to immigration reform and 44 percent of Americans opposed the Senate's amnesty plan.

Yesterday my colleagues and I offered several amendments that would bring accountability to the section 8 housing program under HUD. Not surprisingly, the majority broke their promise of openness in the House and yet again did not allow them to be considered by Members today.

Americans work hard for their money and Americans are also very generous. We are not afraid to help fellow Americans. A roof over your head is one of the most basic human needs, and we are not afraid to spend tax dollars to help those that cannot provide for themselves. But what Americans refuse to do is give up their hard-earned tax dollars to people who sneak into our country illegally. The funds included in this bill must, let me repeat that, must only go to those who are here legally working in this country and paying taxes.

However, the amendment my friend Mr. PRICE and I introduced would have ensured just that: Those receiving funds, taxpayer funds under section 8 are here in this country legally. Our amendment would have brought commonsense accountability to a program that clearly runs short of that right

now. Yet the majority won't even allow Members to consider that amendment on the floor. What are they so afraid of?

It is not even a full year into the majority's new regime, and I am already tired, and so are my constituents, of broken promises. I know Americans are also. If other Members are tired, then they should join us in voting against this rule that blocks these common-sense amendments like those of my colleagues.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Ohio, Mrs. TUBBS JONES.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman for yielding time. I would like to thank the subcommittee Chair, MAXINE WATERS, for all her leadership and work on this; the Chair, Mr. FRANK; and my old colleague from Ohio, Bob Ney for the work.

I rise in support of H.R. 1851. In my district the problems with section 8 housing have bubbled to the surface, particularly in many of the inter-ring suburbs such as Bedford, Bedford Heights, Euclid, Cleveland Heights, and Shaker Heights. They have seen an increase in section 8 housing and are beginning to see a clash in culture between owners and renters, between those who have long time been owners and those who are new at renting property.

It is very important that when we start to look at some of the urban centers, some of the older housing, we start looking at the inter-ring suburbs with older housing, and even the newer suburban municipalities, that we have an opportunity to reform how we have section 8 housing and how it is used. The reform provisions in this bill will not only open access to low-income Americans to rent and even buy, it will provide incentives so that the program can truly serve its purpose of empowering people to become self-sufficient.

Certainly, as we have gone through this whole year or past 2 or 3 years where we have had predatory lenders preying upon our communities, we want to be able to give those new homeowners an opportunity to understand what homeownership means, to understand what kind of situation they could put themselves in without the necessary education. But as important to owning a home is the ability to have a decent job, to be well trained, to take care of your family, et cetera. And through the proposals that are set forth in this program, I believe we will have an opportunity to see that come to fruition.

This bill also includes a number of provisions designed to create other incentives.

I am so proud to have an opportunity to stand on the floor of the House saying that section 8 is going to be more than it has been in the past, that it will reach its true fruition.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes

to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE).

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from Florida for his leadership on this issue and so many others.

I rise opposed to this rule for process and policy reasons.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the new majority promised us and they promised the American people a fair and open process. But again, the majority has failed to live up to its promises, and now that it is out from under the spotlight of election-year promises, we see that they are few and far between.

Before last year's election, Speaker PELOSI said, "Because the debate has been limited and Americans' voices silenced by this restrictive rule, I urge my colleagues to vote against the rule."

And, Mr. Speaker, I agree. So what's changed? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

In December following last year's election, the distinguished majority leader, Mr. HOYER, told the media that "We intend to have a Rules Committee . . . that gives opposition voices and alternative proposals the ability to be heard and considered on the floor of the House."

Mr. Speaker, where is the commitment to that promise, with only six of 23 amendments made in order? What has changed, Mr. Speaker? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Mr. Speaker, the Rules chairman, Ms. SLAUGHTER, has said, "If we want to foster democracy in this body, we should take the time and the thoughtfulness to debate all major legislation under an open rule, not just appropriations bills . . . an open process should be the norm, not the exception."

Mr. Speaker, what's changed? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Rules Committee member Mr. McGOVERN has said, "I would say to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, if you want to show some bipartisanship, if you want to promote a process that has some integrity, then this should be an open rule. All Members should have an opportunity to come here and offer amendments to this bill to improve the quality of the deliberations on this House floor. They should be able to come and offer amendments to clean up this place."

Well, Mr. Speaker, what's changed? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Democratic Caucus Chair RAHM EMANUEL has said, "Let's have an up-and-down vote. Don't be scared. Do not hide behind some little rule. Come on out here. Put it out on the table and let's have a vote . . . So don't hide behind the rule. If this is what you want to do, let's have an up-and-down vote. You can put your votes right up there . . . and then the American people can see what it is all about."

So what has changed, Mr. Speaker? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Mr. Speaker, I am also very curious as to what has happened with the distinguished chairman and my friend on the Financial Services Committee. In the past, not only has he been a vocal advocate for open rules to the legislation that he has brought to the floor, but the new majority has spared him no effort to applaud him for doing so. In fact, Chairman FRANK was such a firm believer in allowing debate, allowing consideration of amendments, that Representative WELCH of Vermont felt so moved to say, "All of us applaud the work of Chairman FRANK for recommending an open rule to this bill . . ."

But, Mr. Speaker, that was on a previous bill. So I would ask what's changed. What is the chairman afraid of? Because it certainly appears that he has lost his passion for an open and a fair process.

In a letter dated July 9, 2007, to the Chair of the House Committee on Rules, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Chairman FRANK urged that the Rules Committee "provide a structured amendment process." So what's changed, Mr. Speaker? What's changed?

□ 1845

The Rules Committee Web site lists 23 amendments submitted for consideration, yet only six were made in order. So what's so scary about the other 17? What's so scary?

Mr. Speaker, I submitted three amendments not made in order by this draconian and restrictive rule. My first amendment would have applied pay-as-you-go spending rules to this bill that CBO has said will have a net cost of \$2.4 billion over the next 5 years. Remember Democrats' promise to use PAYGO rules for everything; instead, they're picking and choosing when to do so. At home we call that breaking a rule and breaking a promise.

The second amendment, Mr. Speaker, is clearly a substantive one. It would have prevented, as the gentlelady from Florida said, prevented illegal immigrants from receiving assistance under the section 8 program by providing all adults to provide secure identification before receiving assistance. It's the kind of commonsense amendment that the Financial Services Committee has applied before. It has also been accepted by the full House on other legislation.

The third amendment would have helped clarify a new requirement for public housing authorities. This bill provides that the public housing authorities have to report rental payments as alternative data to the credit bureaus. Rental payment information is clearly different than other forms of commerce and may need to be treated differently in order to ensure accuracy of credit reporting.

These were three thoughtful and substantive amendments which deserved the consideration of all 435 Members of the House, but they were denied that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, by this restrictive and draconian rule.

Mr. Speaker, back home in my district, rules aren't rules if you only follow them when you want to. Democrats promised to use a fair and open process for everything. Instead, they're picking and choosing. And when you pick and choose to do so, it's called breaking a promise.

So I urge the new majority to rededicate itself to its campaign promises of a fair and open process. We should allow this Chamber to work its will on all legislation. An open process shouldn't just be something that's just talked about solely on the campaign trail. What amendment was so scary that it ought not be included in this discussion?

I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on the rule so that we may have a complete, open and fair debate. The American people deserve and expect no less.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, the Democrats are going to keep their promise to the American people by fighting for affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY).

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. I thank the gentlelady for yielding and just say this is an incredibly important bill. It will expand the number of units of affordable housing and expand the number of vouchers to over 100,000. That's extremely important to the American people.

And in response to the gentleman, if he cared so much about his amendment, he should have offered it during the committee. Chairman FRANK and Subcommittee Chairwoman WATERS held hearings and thoroughly discussed every amendment. The committee met for 2 complete days and thoroughly discussed every amendment. If the gentleman wanted and cared about his amendment, he should have put it forward before the committee.

The rule is very fair. Out of the six amendments that had been accepted, three are Republican, one is bipartisan, and the other is a bipartisan manager's amendment. So the gentleman is not looking at what is the real issue. The real issue is providing affordable housing that is desperately needed in our country. Many families are facing the increased cost of living, and there is a lack of affordable housing. I object strenuously to the facts in the statement by my good friend on the other side of the aisle.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1853, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA). This bill comes before the House at a critical time.

Right now too many Americans face the double onslaught of stagnant wages and ever increasing costs of living, including a critical lack of affordable housing. That is why it is so important to send a strong message to our constituents that we support stable, safe and affordable communities.

Affordable housing is a critical component of this, and Section 8 housing vouchers provide vital rental assistance for low-income families, seniors, and the disabled. I am pleased to report that this legislation comes to the floor with

the strong bipartisan support of the Financial Services Committee which passed this bill in May by a vote of 52–9.

This bill makes a number of changes to the Section 8 voucher, project-based and public housing programs. Specifically this bill:

Makes the Voucher Funding Formula More Efficient. The bill reforms the formula used to allocate Section 8 voucher funds to housing agencies to increase the number of families receiving vouchers.

Creates 100,000 New Vouchers. We authorize 20,000 new incremental vouchers a year over each of the next 5 years.

The Bill Promotes Homeownership. By allowing families to use housing vouchers as a down-payment on a first-time home purchase.

Encourages economic self-sufficiency for low income voucher and public housing families. H.R. 1851 includes a number of provisions designed to create incentives for families to obtain employment, increase earned income, pursue higher education, and save for retirement. No longer will our voucher formula discourage and penalize a voucher holder from seeking and obtaining employment.

Protects Tenants. The bill preserves the rights of voucher families to move to other areas, it addresses excessive voucher rent burdens, provides for more accurate fair market rent calculations to protect voucher holders in units that are in need of repair.

Stronger families and communities are a key part of the Democrats' New Direction for America. This bill strongly aids this goal.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Georgia did offer this amendment in committee, and it was rejected. What he wanted was to be able to present it before the full House. And he was pointing out that the promise that had been made by the majority was that there would be more openness during the consideration of legislation such as this. And that's what the gentleman from Georgia was trying to point out.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished leader on this issue and many others, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT).

Mrs. BIGGERT. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in reluctant opposition to this rule governing the consideration of H.R. 1851.

I had hoped that the committee would see the wisdom in providing an important open rule on this important legislation; and in the absence of an open rule, that it would at least make in order those amendments that Members took the time and effort to draft. Unfortunately, of the 23 amendments filed with the Rules Committee, only six were made in order. While I'm pleased that the majority of those amendments are Republican amendments, the other Republican and Democratic amendments deserved to be debated and given a full and fair hearing.

Section 8 vouchers are tenant-based as well as project-based subsidies that

low-income families use in the private market to lower their rental cost to 30 percent of their incomes. The program has grown to replace public housing as the primary tool for subsidizing the housing costs of low-income families.

Through this program, HUD provides portable subsidies to individuals, tenant-based, who are seeking rental housing from qualified and approved owners, and provide subsidies to private property owners who set aside some or all of their units for low-income families. This is project-based.

The section 8 program began in 1974 primarily as a project-based rental assistance program. However, in the mid-1980s project-based assistance came under criticism for being too costly and for concentrating poor families in high-poverty areas. Consequently, in 1983, Congress stopped providing new project-based section 8 contracts and created vouchers as a new form of assistance.

Mr. Speaker, this bill reflects a bipartisan effort led by Chairman FRANK, Chairwoman WATERS and Republican members of the committee. In fact, this bill enjoyed substantial Republican support in the Financial Services Committee. I am an original cosponsor, along with Mr. SHAYS.

During committee deliberation, we were given the opportunity to debate and consider a variety of issues pertaining to this bill. Members on our side of the aisle had hoped to be given the same opportunity to debate important issues on the House floor. For example, the amendment filed by my colleagues, Mr. PRICE, Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE, Mrs. CAPITO and Mr. CAMPBELL, requiring proper documentation when seeking section 8 Federal assistance was not made in order. This is an important amendment, and I would have hoped we would have the opportunity to debate that issue fully.

There were other amendments filed my by colleagues, Congressmen CHABOT, KING and WICKER, that I think deserve to be considered by the full House. These Members do not serve on the Financial Services Committee and should have been given the chance to offer amendments crucial to their constituents and districts.

Republicans support many aspects of H.R. 1851, but we all deserve the right to participate in the amendment process, whether as members of the committee of jurisdiction or as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Only through an open rule is that possible. For this reason, as a supporter of this legislation, I rise in reluctant opposition to the rule.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, first let me thank the gentlelady for yielding, and also for your leadership, and for bringing together today a very fair rule.

I rise in strong support of this rule and in strong support of this bill, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.

And I want to commend, first of all, our committee chairman, Mr. FRANK, and our subcommittee chairwoman, Congresswoman WATERS, for their leadership and for their hard work in crafting this bill.

As a former member of the Financial Services Committee, actually a member of Congresswoman WATERS' Subcommittee on Housing, I had the opportunity to work with my colleagues on earlier versions of this bill, and this end product contains many important updated provisions. For example, this bill permits families to use housing vouchers as a down payment on a first-time home purchase. The goal of home ownership is necessary to help stabilize family units, promote gainful employment, and restore pride and dignity to many low-income families. It is the primary path to wealth accumulation in America for ordinary folks who don't have stock accounts and who can't play in the stock market and on Wall Street. It's the way to achieve the American Dream for most folks in America. And so home ownership is extremely important, and this bill offers that opportunity.

It also offers a number of changes that protect and benefit tenants. Examples include the portability provisions that preserve voucher families' ability to move to other areas as they determine. They deserve that right and should be able to do that. It provides for more accurate and fair market rent calculation. And it also protects voucher holders in units that are in need of repairs.

Section 8 housing vouchers provide the security of affordable housing to many low-income families, the elderly, people with disabilities, and others who need this type of rental assistance. This leads to stronger families and safer communities, and it does prevent homelessness.

There is a housing crisis in America. This bill is a major step forward in addressing it.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG).

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide some perspective on the effect H.R. 1851 will have on discretionary spending and on the appropriations process. If we're not careful, we will be opening the door to a huge new spending at uncontrollable rates.

The section 8 voucher program has proved widely successful and popular. But there is also wide consensus that we must provide reform to the program, which I agree with. We all want the program to be effective, provide assistance to those truly in need and be fiscally responsible for American taxpayers.

First, I want to point out, there are positive reforms in H.R. 1851. The bill increases the number of PHAs allowed

to participate in the Moving to Work Program. This program, renamed in the bill as the Housing Innovation Program, gives PHAs flexibility to design and test methods that achieve efficiency, reduce costs and promote self-sufficiency.

The bill also enhances HUD's Family Self-Sufficiency Act program which works to give low-income families the skills and experience needed to become economically independent.

I do, however, have major concerns with the provisions in H.R. 1851 that abandons the budget-based funding methodology. Going back to the flawed unit-based methodology like this bill proposes is a recipe for budgetary disaster.

A unit-based system lacks incentives for PHAs to maximize assistance to needy families within a fixed budget. A unit-based formula system that includes costs incurred as well as units put under lease simply tells PHAs to lease at whatever cost they want, even if it is more than the market rate and the market price for the same unit. We already know what that can mean. We have experience with a unit-based approach and have seen what it means.

In fiscal years 2003 and 2004, the Appropriations Committee shifted to a unit-based funding to spur leasing, and the result was skyrocketing per unit cost and total funding requirements that increased by 40 percent, from \$9 billion to \$13 billion, in 2 years. In 2005, a budget-based system was re-instituted.

We, as appropriators, can simply not afford to see a similar increase in the future. Today, in total, the section 8 program has grown to consume 60 percent of HUD's budget. Going back to a unit-based program will only increase that percentage. Simply put, as the Housing Voucher Program takes up more of HUD's budget, there will be less we will have for other housing programs.

As the former chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee for HUD, and as the current chairman will attest, the growing Housing Voucher Program is forcing Congress to choose between section 8 vouchers and other important HUD priorities. That includes programs that support first-time ownership, home ownership, homeless facilities, and care and housing for the elderly and the disabled.

And then there is this Community Development Block Grant, which I believe virtually every Member supports because they hear from their mayor, the city council and from the county administrators on how the program makes their community better. If we're not careful, these programs will face deep cuts in future years just to accommodate the section 8 increases.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a work in progress. It has been improved in committee, and I believe amendments before us today can improve it further. I am hopeful that as the bill works its way through into the legislative process, we can improve it even more.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the distinguished colleagues who have participated in this debate. Obviously this is a very, very important piece of legislation that is being brought forth today.

We have concerns with regard to the process, not in the creation of the legislation itself but in the way in which it has been brought forth to the floor and the rule that brings the legislation to the floor and establishes the terms of debate for the legislation.

I think it has been a good debate. I think we've been able to express certainly our concern with the process, as well as in the case of most Members that I have certainly heard on this debate, the evident awareness of the importance of the underlying legislation and the issue dealt with by the underlying legislation.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to thank, on behalf of the folks I represent back home in Florida and all Americans, express my thanks to Chairwoman Maxine Waters and to Chairman Barney Frank for standing up and fighting for America's families and affordable housing.

I urge my colleagues to continue the American tradition of promoting the American Dream and turning that dream into a reality for decent, safe, clean and affordable housing, particularly for the elderly, the disabled, veterans in our community, domestic violence victims and all families.

□ 1900

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote on the previous question and on the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1851 and insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

SECTION 8 VOUCHER REFORM ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CASTOR). Pursuant to House Resolution 534 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1851.

□ 1902

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1851) to reform the housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, with Mr. WEINER in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) and the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield to myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007. As you know, I introduced H.R. 1851 on March 29, 2007. I want to thank each of my colleagues, both on the Committee on Financial Services and in the House, who have joined with me to see that this important legislation passes the House. I especially want to thank Chairman BARNEY FRANK for his leadership, Ranking Member JUDY BIGGERT, and CHRISTOPHER SHAYS for their original cosponsorship and support of H.R. 1851.

It has been less than 2 months since the Committee on Financial Services considered major reforms to the section 8 program. The Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, which passed the Committee on Financial Services by a vote of 52-9, is truly the culmination of work that began in the 109th Congress.

There are many Members of Congress who have expressed major concerns to me about the future stability of the section 8 voucher program, given the recent changes in the funding formula and its impact on tenants. This bill addresses many of those problems and will return much needed stability to the section 8 program and the 2 million low-income families who rely upon it.

We heard from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, public housing agencies, national housing interest groups and advocates, and other housing experts about the importance of reforming the section 8 program. While there is consensus that the section 8 program needed to be reformed, HUD disagrees on how to reform the program.

National housing organizations like the National Low Income Housing Coalition and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities which represent those directly affected by the change in the funding formula agree that basing the funding for a program as important as the voucher program on data that is 3 years old is just simply bad policy.

In 2004, Congress changed how we paid public housing authorities for vouchers under lease. Instead of paying the actual cost of the voucher, the decision was made to pay for what the